

## [H. C. Van Boskirk]

17071506

[?????] S241-LA DUP

LM

Week

Item No.

Words

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St.

DATE March 23, 1939 SUBJECT American Folklore Stuff

1. Name and address of informant H. C. Van Boskirk, 1245 S. 11th, Lincoln.
2. Date and time of interview March 27-'30; 1:30 to 3:45 p.m.
3. Place of interview Home of informant
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant Harold [Handee?], 1247 So. 11th., Lincoln, Nebr.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you None
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

## Library of Congress

Large upstairs apartment over a grocery store. Lavishly furnished, many easy cushioned chairs, etc. Piano, polished top tables, room well finished and decorated, clean, light, somewhat precise in arrangement, cozy appearing. Seems to be occupied only by older folks. Situated in an outlying semi-business district flanked by a good class of residences, school etc. [??]

### FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St., Lincoln

DATE March 23, 1939 SUBJECT American Folklore Stuff

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT H. C. Van Boskirk, 1245 So. 11th, Lincoln.

1. Ancestry American Scotch Irish.
2. Place and date of birth La Clair, Iowa., Apr. 7, 1856.
3. Family Wife living.
4. Places lived in, with dates—La Clair, Marengo, Ia., [?] to 1860; Brazil, Ind., 1860-1872; Marengo, Ia., 1872-1874; Lancaster Co. Nebr., 1874-1875; Norway, Ia., 1876-1882; Aurora, Nebr., 1882-1884; Frontier Co. Nebr., 1884-1891; Lincoln, Nebr., 1893; [Strang?], Nebr., 1893-1896; Crawford, Nebr., 1896-1906; Lincoln, 1906 to date.
5. Education, with dates  
Grade [?-1874] Grade and high school.
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Milling business and trade 1875-1882. Implement business 1882-1884. Homestead Farm 1884-1886. Hardware business

## Library of Congress

1886-1891. Hardware implements 1891-1906. Traveling salesman, stock remedies; Grocery business 1906-1920.

7. Special skills and interests Traveling saleswork; milling; grocery business.

8. Community and religious activities No church affiliation given.

9. Description of informant Light, clear complected, sandy gray hair, smooth shaven, small, somewhat bent with age.

10. Other points gained in interview Cautious disposition, analytical mind, rather direct manner, ready talker; had good expression but like 99% of humans, talks mostly about trivial personal experiences. Altho his background would indicate many rich experiences.

[??]

### FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St., Lincoln

DATE March 28, 1939 SUBJECT American Folklore Stuff

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT H. C. Van Boskirk, 1245 So. 11th St.

Up at Hampton, Nebraska, there was a close-fisted farmer who was always 'flamboodlin' somebody to save spending any money. I was in the implement business at Aurora, and so heard of his tricks, before he tried any of them on us.

He went to one of the local dealers in implements there and pretended great interest in a cultivator but said he would like to try it out on approval. They let him take it out and he plowed his corn the first time then he returned it and said he could not make up his mind. After this he went to another dealer and managed to deal him the same way. This time he

## Library of Congress

plowed his corn again. For the last plowing or "lay by" he went to still another man and put over his gag again thereby he tended his corn crop without buying a plow at all.

In those days everyone couldn't afford to buy new tools and particularly those which were not used a great deal. Ordinarily they would borrow from some neighbor what they lacked and loan back something which the neighbor didn't have. Work and implements were thus exchanged without the outlay of any cash. [Rinders?] and certain other machines were sometimes community owned and used but they like threshing machines were usually hired for cash.

People of many different races and types found themselves living neighbors and neighboring with one another. They were eager to visit and took their entertainment and social pleasures where and when they could get them.

## 2

The old medicine show seemed to draw big crowds who came, many of them to see the show and hear the gags, some on local people. They also bought lots of the medicine and stuff which was offered for sale. The 'doctor', as he called himself, sold anything from electric belts to corn salve and snake oil. They used to make up those electric belts out of copper discs, flannel and leather straps. Most of the people of the earlier days in Nebraska had a profound respect for the powers of these electric belts as it was supposed that electric waves or vibrations were the basis of life and its forces.

The street fakir, who used to come into a small town, driving a horse and buggy and sell his magic soap or some other merchandise was a [?] on sight. One of these outfits showed up one day out on the street corner, near us, and soon had a crowd around him. He played a little music on a banjo and then got down to business.

First he gave a noisy talk on the virtues of this soap cleaner that he had. Then he borrowed a handkerchief, a clean white one, from some one in the crowd and hopped out of the buggy. He loosened one of the rear wheels and smeared this clean handkerchief

## Library of Congress

with the grease on the axle, it was supposed to be just regular wagon dope. The thing was a sorry looking sight. He got back up in the buggy and took one of the bars of soap he was selling. With some water he made a suds and with very little effort the handkerchief came out snow white. This was enough for the crowd, who rushed up to buy the stuff.

One of the [bots?] who bought some of it tried it on his handkerchief by smearing it with the dirty grease from his buggy axle. The cloth did not clean up when he used the magic soap. We learned later that they would clean off the axle and wheel hub with gasoline and then grease it with tar soap which looked like the regular axle grease.

3

One of the prettiest sights I ever saw was a [Flambeau?] club parade in the days of the populists. They all carried Roman candles, which they kept firing as they marched.

Out in Hitchcock county I was invited to a German wedding dance one time and we arrived about noon of the day set. Now the bride and groom had been taken into town early in the morning to get married. Some of the brothers went with them and were supposed to make the wedding arrangements while the young couple waited at the hotel.

But the boys, instead of looking after the wedding business, got drunk instead and the bride and groom waited all day before something was done about it. The guests had all gathered in for the wedding dance and they finally started the dance without the bride and groom. The wedding party pulled in after dark and the boys, who went with the couple, were revived enough to start all over again. They all drank beer and danced all night long. We danced with the bride and staid through the night. The crowd looked pretty seedy the next morning.

Most of the earlier people in Nebraska were friendly and sociable and dependable on one another more in their work and entertainment.

## Library of Congress

They cover too much territory now to be much concerned about their neighbors and people around them.

4

FORM D

(Supplementary)

On North 14th Street, near Belmont, is a Jewish cemetery, which did and still does observe some of the traditional customs of the race. No nails are used in the cases or caskets, and they are held together by wooden pins. Thus some called these wooden pin funerals. It is said that the pillow in the casket is filled with earth.

A local undertaker has taken up several Chinese bodies out of Wyuka cemetery, cleaned the bones and packed them in a box for shipment to China. The Chinese left the bodies here for 5 years or more but unless the dead one was very poor and without friends, which was'nt likely, the bodies were returned to their ancestral burying ground.